



Testimony
Betsy Gara, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Environment Committee
February 19, 2016

Re: HB-5150 - AN ACT CONCERNING TREE WARDENS' NOTICES ON TREES AND SHRUBS PRIOR TO REMOVAL, TREE REMOVAL ALONG STATE HIGHWAYS AND CLEAN-UP BY PUBLIC UTILITY CORPORATIONS FOLLOWING CERTAIN TREE REMOVAL.

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) represents approximately 111 small towns throughout Connecticut.

COST respectfully urges your **opposition to HB-5150**, which imposes unnecessary burdens on communities regarding the removal of trees and shrubs.

Under current law, unless the condition of a tree or shrub constitutes an immediate public hazard, the tree warden is required to post a "suitable notice" stating the tree warden's intention to remove or prune the tree or shrub. If there are objections to the removal of the tree or shrub, a public hearing must be held and a decision rendered. A party may appeal the decision in superior court. In addition, tree wardens must enforce all provisions of the law for the preservation of such trees and shrubs, and prescribe regulations for the care and preservation of trees and shrubs.

Current law strikes the appropriate balance by allowing a municipality to take steps to remove or prune trees or shrubs and ensuring that residents and others have the opportunity to object to the removal, including appeal rights.

The bill, however, instead of requiring the posting of a suitable notice, requires tree wardens to post a notice on *each and every tree or shrub* "that the tree warden determines may have aesthetic or environmental importance". This imposes an unnecessary cost burden on municipalities with little if any benefit to the community. Moreover, determining whether a tree has "aesthetic importance" is extremely subjective, inviting a lot of confusion.

COST urges rejection of HB-5150.

Thank you for your consideration.

COST is a statewide advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.